

Common Folk Oral History Collection
Interview OR.0013.01 : Tape 1

Melvyn Goldstein, Editor

Center for Research on Tibet
Department of Anthropology

and
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Location of Interview: Sogang, Panam [Tib. pa snam] County, Tibet Autonomous Region, China
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Interviewed by: Melvyn Goldstein and Ben Jiao
Name: Phundrül [Tib. phun sgrol]
Gender: Female
Age: ca. 70
Date of Birth: ca. 1930

Abstract

The subject was born in the village of Kepa during the old society to a family of shungyuba. In this interview, she discusses having to separate from her family when her brother took a wife, and how she then had a difficult time subsisting. She talks about the improvement in her life after democratic reforms and describes working for the Mutual Aid Team. She also discusses the commune era in her village.

Tape 1

Q: Would you please tell us your life story?

A: My life was full of suffering. I don't have anything good to tell you.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Kepa [Tib. gas pa]. Later Kepa was carried away by the flood down there near the gully. That was my home. After that, I lived separately with my children's father [her husband].

Q: When did you leave your home? Was your family a treba household?

A: We were treba. We were under the Döjüng Dzong.

Q: Were you a shungyuba?

A: Yes. We were shungyuba. We were not under an aristocratic family. We had to work for the taxes and the corvée labor. After my parents died, my brother and his bride lived in the family and I lived separately.

Q: Why did you live separately?

A: In the old society, they would not keep the daughter in the family [after a daughter-in-law enters the family home].

Q: Why?

A: People were saying, "The fish had a wing, but they don't have the right to fly [Tib. nya la gshogs pa yod kyang/ 'phur ba'i dbang cha med]." They would never keep the daughter in the family. Usually, they would send the daughter as a bride, but in some cases where a daughter was not sent as a bride, the family would give the daughter some share of its property and let her live separately.

Q: How many daughters did you have in your family?

A: My mother gave birth to thirteen children and I was the only daughter.

Q: There were twelve sons, right?

A: Yes, but they died one after another when they were small. They died from diseases. Now, I don't have any brothers. My last

elder brother who was called Imi died the year before last year. I have been saying that now it is the time for me to die. My son died this year.

After my son died from poisoning, I could not stand up. My late son asked permission to have this place and made a plan for building a house. After my son died, the other house collapsed but I couldn't do anything.

Q: How old were you when you separated from your family?

A: I was probably twenty-one years old. After my father died, I had to leave. If I didn't get separated that would be regarded as a bad thing. That was not only me, at that time, all daughters were like that. Nowadays, daughters are kept home and they take a magba. At that time, we didn't have the right to stay at home.

Q: When you got separated, were you alone?

A: At that point, my children's father was with me.

Q: Did two of you get together before you separated from your family?

A: We were together before that.

Q: How did the two of you get together?

A: We got together when I was small. At that time, I didn't have the hope of staying at home. Therefore, the two of us just got together [no formal marriage] and I told my family that I was going to get separated.

Q: Where is your children's father from?

A: He was also from this area. He was a cousin of Dawa Tsamjō [Tib. zla ba mtshams chod]. My children's father died.

Q: When you separated from your family, did they give you any land and animals?

A: They didn't give me any land or animals. They just gave me some clay pots, bedding and some tsamba. I borrowed most of the things and rented a room from Chugong [Tib. chu gong]. During the harvest I had to go to work for Chugong for seven days as the rent. There were two to three households such as Pebur and Jangkyl [Tib. byang dkyil] who rented their rooms. We were called single women [Tib. morangga]. I had to carry my baby and go to harvest the fields. When I would work for the households, they would give me some food for me and my children. So I was taking my children with the hope of getting some food.

Q: How did you manage your livelihood without any land?

A: I would carry my child [on her back] and go to work as a servant for the other households, such as Trekhang [Tib. bkras khang]. My husband would go to work as a servant of another household. We would lock the door of our room and go to work as servants. The employer would give us the food [that day] and later, they would pay the wages. For working during the spring, they would pay twenty-four dowa or six drongkhe. That was not the rukhe. That would be one load for a donkey.

During the autumn, each person would be paid twelve drongkhe. That was equal to forty-eight dowa. We depended on this wage. And I would also do some wool work for other households and they would give us some roasted barley or tsamba to be given to the children.

Q: Were there many people making their living just like you, without having any land?

A: Yes, there were many people like us. They didn't have even chupa like this to wear. They were just wearing chupa with many patches. Those people didn't have cotton to wear. This place was one of the worse places and was under a gerpa. In those days, we would not even see chang, we would just beg from the better households for some whey liquid to drink.

Q: Did you have to pay the mibo fee?

A: We didn't need to pay the mibo.

Q: Why?

A: Because we were shungyuba. We were renting a room and working for our landlord [Tib. nang gi sbyin bdag]. We had to perform the horse and pack animal corvée tax. Soldiers would come and demand the horse corvée. They would say that they wanted the horses right now, but we didn't have horses prepared at that time. If we would have known earlier that they were going to come, we would have borrowed the horses. They would say that they were the adrun or the rupön or the gyagpön and they wanted the horse right now. They would beat us for not having the horse ready. In the old society, some people who were imposing the horse corvée rode human beings, putting the horse's bit in their mouths. But I was not ridden by those people.

Q: Why did they ride a person?

A: That was because they didn't get the horse corvée. So they were oppressing the people. But nowadays, there are no such things. At that time, they made the people suffer like that and we didn't get the chance to have a good livelihood.

Q: You didn't have any land, right?

A: We didn't have any land. When we would go in the fields, people would shout, "What are you doing there?" They were worried

that we would pluck some pea pods and wild herbs.

Q: What was your husband doing?

A: He was going to work as a servant during the spring and autumn. In winter, he would make some soles for the woolen boots, and he would go to the nomads' area to exchange the boot soles for yak hair and wool. In that way, we could barely raise our children.

Q: When you were working as a servant, did you live with your husband or did you live where you were working?

A: I would usually stay home and my husband would go to get some food. When the food came, I used to feed my children. Sometimes, some households would hire us for a single day and we would get paid one dowa of barley or tsamba. That was called "serving for a day [Tib. nyin rgyugs]." We could not save anything because we had to raise the children.

Q: What relation did you have with the owner [Tib. bdag po] who gave orders to you?

A: We were shungyuba under the Dūjung Dzong. At that point, the dzongpön would come to the shiga. They would say that the dzongpön had come and you should come immediately to serve as the stable boy [Tib. rta g.yog] and the cook's assistant [Tib. thab g.yog]. The Dzong would come to Mönkhar [Tib. smon mkhar] and they would say that we should come right then. We would go very quickly, but they would beat us up saying that we were late.

Q: At that time, they would make people work as the stable boy and the cook's assistant, but what other work did you have to do for them?

A: They would say that they wanted "sugpa [Tib. sug pa]" [a plant used for washing] and "sindrung [Tib. bse 'bru]" [a type of small red fruit]. And they would say that they wanted pea pods. We didn't have any land from where we could pluck the pea pods. If we plucked pea pods from other household's fields, they would scold us. For that people would suffer beatings. But I was not beaten.

Q: Why?

A: I was honest. However, when people would bully me I used to quarrel with them. When they were telling me to bring something that I didn't have, I used to quarrel with them saying, "How can I get you something that I can't find? How can I tell a dead body to stand up?"

Q: When you were doing that work, did they pay you wages?

A: Who the hell would pay us wages! Let alone wages, they would not give us a single bowl of food. Furthermore, we were very afraid of being beaten and had to run on the way to serve them. We had to work for the landlord for seven days and we had to work for the gembo for four days. During these eleven days, they would not pay wages. If we didn't go to work on time they would scold us.

Q: When the dzongpön would come to Mönkhar, how many days did you have to serve them?

A: We had to serve them as long as they stayed in that place. When they would stay overnight, we had to take care of the horses at night and stay overnight. When they would just stop for a meal, we would also serve for that time.

Q: Who was the lord [Tib. dpon po] of your husband?

A: The lord was a gerpa family called Sogang. He was the son of an unmarried woman. The gerpa would say that they were going to Western Tibet, or they were going to Kalimpong, India, and they would take my husband as their servant whenever they wanted.

Q: Did your husband have to go like that every time?

A: Yes. Whenever they would go somewhere, my husband had to serve them.

The son of the kungö was sent to Tö Lhatse [Tib. lha rtse] Dzong as a magba and my husband was given to him to serve him as his servant. My husband didn't have the chance to say no. That kungö [the magba] was a cruel person who would beat my husband very severely. At that time, many of our people died in Tö. My husband was beaten very severely so he fled from that place.

Q: What kind of work did they have to do in Tö?

A: They had to do whatever kind of work the kungö would make them do, like taking care of animals. That was also the household of a gerpa, so they would make them do various kinds of works. My husband was beaten so severely that his health became very poor and he always had coughs. After that he ran away from that place and returned to our home. He was not called back again. After that, he was supposed to serve the kungö living in this place, but later he worked as a servant in Kyinkar [Tib. dkyil mkhar] Village.

Q: Did your husband go to Kalimpong?

A: No, he didn't. His relatives were in Kalimpong. One of the daughters of the gerpa was sent to Kalimpong as a bride. Therefore, they gave some servants to their daughter. After that, those servants settled in Kalimpong. I also have some relatives in Kalimpong, but I didn't receive any letters from them. Before that we were writing letters to each other. I had a brother in Kalimpong. We were from the same father.

Q: How did they send him to Kalimpong?

A: He was not sent to Kalimpong. He was not able to make a living in Tibet so he went to work as a coolie in the mountain ranges in Kalimpong. Later, I heard that he was living in Gangtok in Sikkim.

Q: When the two of you had to go out to work, who was taking care of the children?

A: We had to take the children with us.

Q: Did the father take the children or you?

A: Either of us took the children.

Q: Didn't the employer say something about taking your children with you?

A: They didn't say anything and they would give food to the children. When the child was in its infancy, I would carry it on my back and let it sleep where I was working. When we would take the children who could walk along with us, they would give food to the children. Now, my son has died, so it is time for me to die.

Q: When you went to work, who was taking care of the animals?

A: At that time, we didn't have any animals. We didn't have anything. We just had an iron stove. We were just going through the motions of locking the door. But actually, we didn't have anything to be stolen and we didn't need to be worried about that. Nowadays, our livelihood is a little bit better, so we are worried about theft. If a thief would come to our room in those early days, they would burst into laughter. They might talk to each other saying how could this family lead their life?

Q: Didn't you get any chance and take some land on lease?

A: No, we didn't. If we took some land on lease, we would need plowing animals and farm tools. We didn't have anything, so how could we take fields for lease?

Q: Didn't your home in Kepa help you?

A: They couldn't help very much because they were not a rich household. They were middle class. They had a lot of loans to be paid.

Q: Why did they have to pay a lot of loans?

A: The term loan [Tib. bu lon] means that the father had left the loans for his son to pay. The loans were from generation to generation. Actually, the present generation didn't use the barley or money, but their forefather's names were written on the contracts.

At the time of the harvest and threshing, the creditors would come to collect the loans. That was like the saying, "The tsamba ran out just after the threshing of crops [Tib. g.yul thon spags chad]." But nowadays, we are not really like that because we don't need to pay loans. Nowadays, even [though] we have to take some loans, we have the means to pay them at harvest time. At that time they didn't have the means to pay the loans.

Q: Why did they have to pay so many loans?

A: As I mentioned above, the names of their forefathers were written on the contracts. Therefore, they didn't have any choice but to pay it. They were paying only the interest on the loans. The principal was still there.

Q: How did they charge interest? How much interest did they have to pay for one khe of barley?

A: It was 20 percent [Tib. Inga drug skyed] or one khe of interest for five khe of principal per year. There was also 14 percent [Tib. bdun brgyad 'gro] which was one khe interest for seven khe of principal. And the interest for many years was added together, so the people had to pay interest on the interest.

Q: You were a treba, but how did you become a morangga?

A: That was because I got separated from my family and I didn't have land and animals. Because I was living in that house, I had to work for their corvée tax obligations. That was like the saying, "If you drink the water of that place, you have to abide by the law of that place [Tib. yul chu btungs nas yul khirms srung]." Even nowadays, if somebody is doing something unfair, I am aware of that. The State didn't tell people to do like that. Actually, according to the policy at the present time, we should support the poor people. But now some people are treating the poor people badly and treating the rich people nicely.

Q: How long did you live with that kind of livelihood in those days?

A: I lived like that until the reforms.

Q: Did you hear something about the fighting in Lhasa?

A: They didn't say anything like that. We heard that one day the State [Tib. rgyal khab] would come and they would implement the reforms and we would get the fields. My son Gyenub Phentog [Tib. rgyal nub phan thogs] was born before the revolt and my late son was born in the year when the revolt took place. My son got a share of the land.

Q: Who told you those things?

A: Who knows? They were just holding meetings many times. We didn't know what was going on.

Q: Who was calling the meetings?

A: There were some people called tsugdrang. They were calling the meetings. They were saying that they were implementing the reforms.

Q: Were those people Tibetans or Chinese?

A: At first some Tibetans came. After that, some Chinese came and they were making a lot of propaganda. At that point, I was wondering who would give us the land. But I didn't know in detail what was going to happen.

Q: Were you glad or were you worried about that?

A: They were saying that some people were different class ranks and they were holding struggle sessions against them.

Q: How did they hold the struggle sessions?

A: My home was categorized as ngatsab, so lmi suffered struggle sessions.

Q: For what reason did he suffer struggle sessions?

A: They were saying that he was staying on a big area of land, so he was the ngatsab. They were saying that he had imposed a lot of suppression and exploitation. He was taken to the county where they held a struggle session against him. I never held a struggle session against other people. They were saying that we were given the power. And there were many people other than lmi. We were told to hold struggle sessions and beat those people. I had never held a single struggle session against them.

Q: What was your reason for not holding struggle sessions?

A: I was thinking it would be useless to say something that I didn't know. Usually, we would go to request things from those people showing great respect and using honorific words, but they were saying that we had to beat them. I said I am going to stay like that. They were saying that the Communist Party had come so the people who didn't have lands would be given lands and the people who didn't have animals would be given animals.

Q: How much did you get at that time?

A: I didn't get much because just before the revolt I bought a small calf.

Q: How did you get the money for buying the calf?

A: We used the money that we got from selling woolen boot soles. I was thinking, maybe it would die or maybe it would survive. We didn't have hay or grass to feed the calf because we didn't have fields.

At that time, they implemented the reform against the big ngadag. Our kungö's son is still in Lhasa. Our kungö said that OR.0013 bought a calf, but he didn't have any hay so he gave six loads of hay. I was thinking he was really a holy person to take refuge [Tib. skyabs su mchi] in. Later, I came to know that at that time the kungö knew that the reforms were going to take place. But we didn't know anything.

Q: Was that before the reforms began?

A: That was just before the reforms. Our kungö was a progressive person [Tib. yar thon]. Before the reforms he gave some old rugs and other old rubbish things to the poor people. Those things were very useful for us.

Q: Before that, did the kungö give things to the people like that?

A: How could they give? They might be thinking that if the reforms took place they couldn't keep possession of those things. Therefore, they gave away those things before the reform. Usually, although our kungö had power he was a good person. I was thinking he had accumulated good merit. So he became a progressive ngadag and he got the job in the [post-1959] government. They were saying that they would distribute the lands according to the number of people in a family. I got fields for four people, my husband, two children and me.

Q: How much land did you get?

A: It was said that each person was to be given two mu of land, which was equal to two khe. I heard that we got six khe and six dre of land. We didn't have the seed [for planting], but after that the seed was also given.

Q: Did the State give you the seeds?

A: Yes.

Q: At the time of the reforms, other than land, what other things did you get?

A: They were saying that we would be given five to six sheep from the ngadag's sheep flock, but they gave me a yak. I didn't get

other animals because I had that small calf. They were probably saying that I had a calf, so they didn't need to give animals to me.

Q: Didn't they give you a cow?

A: No, they didn't. There was a person called Kyipa [Tib. skyid pa] living down there. During the reforms, they gave him a very good horse with a full set of a very good quality saddle, a saddle tack and rugs. When he got that, he cried loudly, saying, "What shall I do with the horse because I don't have hay to feed it?" At the present time, if someone would be given something like that, he would be very glad. At that time, they gave horses and mules and cows. We didn't get much, because originally we did not belong to that gerpa and we were not their trenyog. The people who belonged to that gerpa were given more things. Some people were given good houses, but we didn't get a house. At that time, it was like the old society. The better households were given more shares and the poorer people got less shares.

Q: What else did you get?

A: I only got the yak and the land.

Q: In the first year, you got the seed from the government, right?

A: Yes, I got eight khe of seed.

Q: How did you plow the field?

A: I exchanged the yak for an ox. There was another household who got an ox and some plows and other tools. I got a hammer. So the two of us cooperated and borrowed some other tools and plowed the fields.

Q: How was the yield in that year?

A: The yield was not bad.

Q: Did you get to keep all of the yield for yourself? You had to sell the grain to the government, right?

A: For one or two years, we didn't have to sell grain. Later, they were saying that we had to give the Patriotic Common Grain [Tib. rgyal gces spyi 'bru] to the government and other things.

Q: Was that during the Mutual Aid Team?

A: Yes.

Q: How did the Mutual Aid Team start?

A: Groups of people worked in the Mutual Aid Teams.

Q: How did things work in the Mutual Aid Teams?

A: We had to bring our animals and work on other people's fields.

Q: How many households were there in the Mutual Aid Team?

A: In our team, there were about six to seven households, Kyipa, Khangmarpa [Tib. khang dmar pa], Jobig [Tib. lcog big], Kanyi Tsering, Yülkhang [Tib. g.yul khang], Surkhang [Tib. zur khang] and our household.

Q: Were all of you women living alone or were some treba?

A: Among those people, Khangmarpa, Jobig and Kyipa were treba.

Q: How did you work in the Mutual Aid Team?

A: All the people were working and they would make notes of the work points. Later, we would compensate each other for the extra work points that were done. They elected a tsugdrang.

Q: Who was making the people work?

A: The tsugdrang was making people work. Pemba Wangdü [Tib. spen pa dbang 'dus] and Tenzin [Tib. bstan 'dzin] were our tsugdrang. They were better in working on the fields because they had experience.

Q: Who was giving the orders to the tsugdrang?

A: There was nobody above them. In our team, they were the leaders. In the village there were many leaders.

Q: Were people glad to work in the team or were they saying that it was not good?

A: People were happy in the Mutual Aid Team and they were doing well. People had to work, but the livelihood was good. All people knew how to farm and the yields were also good. We also did some sideline work like making paper, collecting and selling cow dung and selling reeds [Tib. chu rtsa]. We made some common accumulation income [Tib. spyi pa'i gsog 'jog] and we were getting along well.

Q: Did they distribute the common accumulation [income] to the members?

A: Yes, they distributed the money in the team. The government made us roast barley and grind tsamba so we had to go to collect thorns for [the fuel] roasting the barley. We had to grind the barley in the water mill. At that point, people were not causing trouble to each other. When superiors were encouraging us to work, people were obeying but nowadays people have become much worse. This year was worse than the year before.

Q: Why did it become worse?

A: Who knows! They are doing things as they wish. When they make notes of the work points, they are giving the work points looking at the appearance of the people instead of looking at the actual work. They are giving very high work points for the people who don't deserve it. They are giving low work points for the people who are working very hard. That is the kind of livelihood we have now. We are saying that we are not going to tolerate it. The leaders of this place are not the only authorities to whom we can make the report. There was an old woman who was saying that she was going to crawl and report the matter to the Autonomous Region government. [Note: There was not work point system when the interview took place.]

Q: At the time of the Mutual Aid Team, your livelihood got better, right?

A: Yes.

Q: What kinds of changes did you have in terms of clothing and so on?

A: In the old society we had to wear the chupa which was called [Tib. ma med dgu brtsegs], which means the chupa had nine layers of patches so that the original material could not be seen. But nowadays we don't need to wear that kind of chupa. So in any case, it is better at present.

Q: I mean at the time of the Mutual Aid Team?

A: From the time of the Mutual Aid Team our livelihood became better.

Q: How did your furniture get better during the Mutual Aid Team?

A: It would seem that I am complaining for myself, but actually I didn't get much better [Tib. pag pag byed yas mi 'dug].

Q: Why?

A: Because, I didn't have any youngsters [Tib. gzhon pa] at home to work. My husband and my son were dead and now I have only one youngster who is like an idiot and he went after the cow. My granddaughter is small, but she goes to do some work so I can get some money for buying tea. I didn't get chemical fertilizer for two years. I didn't have a person who could be sent to earn an income so I didn't have any source of getting money. Mine is the only household that could not buy the chemical fertilizer for two years. I told them that I could not buy the fertilizer.

The government gave animals to the households who had animals, but they didn't give me animals. That was really unfair [Tib. g.yas dkar g.yon nag]. The rich people are getting richer and the poor people are getting poorer. In this place they are doing all sorts of things. If I would not die for a while, I might get a chance to talk about that. I really cannot tolerate this any more. They gave ten points to my son who was working hard though he was kind of an idiot [Tib. lkugs tshod tshod] but they gave only eight work points for my daughter who was sent to do all the hard work. Some people who were much worse than my daughter were given eight and a half work points. I was telling them, "You can take me wherever you want. If you grasp my head you can get a hand full of hair. If you grasp the bottom of my chupa, you can get a hand full of patches [i.e. she didn't have anything to be taken away]." We are grateful to the State. All people know that. But the people in between are making new policies and they are taking the law into their own hands [Tib. khirms sa bar gcod]. I am not bragging but I am doing everything fair and just, and I was also telling other people to work hard. I am planning to send this boy [her magba] to Nagchu to make some money. So I want to ask you about the cold weather in Nagchu. Some some say that it is very cold and that he couldn't take it.

Q: If you send him in winter, it is very cold but there will be no problem in summer.

A: So I will send him and he can back in the 9th month. If I don't send him, I won't have money to be paid here when they come to collect it.

Q: Just after the reform and the setting up of the Mutual Aid Team, what kind of changes did you have in terms of food and those things compared with the old society?

A: At that time, great changes took place. In the old society, I didn't have any animals and I only had some butter to be added to the bowl of tea [Tib. phor mar] [means she didn't have enough to make churned butter tea]. Although, I didn't get much of a share at the time of the reforms, I got land, so my livelihood improved because I could get my own yield and nobody came to take it away. Therefore, I got food to eat for myself and to feed my children, though I didn't have grain to be saved like other people. And my clothing also got little bit better. Even if I had to buy some clothes I had the means to pay for it. I could say that I wanted to buy a shirt or a vest. Later, I was able to buy some animals. I was able to manage myself. I didn't have sheep and goats. Since then, I didn't need to worry about the food. I was thinking it was a coincidence that when I gave birth to my child the State gave me the land. I was really lucky. It was like the proverb, "It was coincidence when the kungö came on the mountain pass and the servant boiled the tea [Tib. sku ngo la thog slebs pa dang/ g.yog pos ja bskol ba dang kha thug 'khe]."

Q: When they destroyed the monasteries and sent the monks and nuns back to their homes, what did you think?

A: I was just glad to get the land. The State was saying that we should not practice religion. I thought that was the decision made by the government. I don't care about not having the chance to do religious practice. When the time comes, people will die. When it was the time to die, even those great Lamas also have to die. I was thinking about my children. If there would be a chance to practice the religion, they could do it. If there would be no chance to do that, there would be nothing to do because that would be the overall situation.

In the old society I had a deep faith in the religion. I thought that if I could recite a single mantra, that would help me when I would die. Even nowadays, sometimes I think that if I don't recite prayers, I might face some hardship. Sometimes, when I am agitated, I think now it is too late for me to die. My children are dead, so what is the use for me to stay alive? But when my anger calms down, I think that although I don't have any delicious food to eat, I have tsamba to eat, so I wish I could live a little bit longer.

Q: After the Mutual Aid Team was over, when did the People's Commune or the rukhag start in your place?

A: In our place it was said that the rukhag would be established and all the animals and the agricultural implements would be merged together. They were making that announcement many times, saying that we could keep only the cows. The other animals would be merged together.

Q: What did they say about the advantages for merging all of those things together?

A: They said if we merged those things together, it would be very good. In the rukhag they would give work points and there was nothing to be worried about. Equal work would get equal payment and the grain and the money would be paid according to the work points. At that time, we didn't know in detail about those things. We were just wondering what was going to happen. They asked all the people in the village whether they would join the rukhag or not. Some people said that they were going to join, some people said that they were not going to join this year. I told them, "I am going where the majority of the people are going. I am going to do the labor and I am going to take my children. And I am going to merge all of my animals and agricultural implements."

Q: Why did you say that you were going where the majority of the people were going? What did you think at that point?

A: I was thinking that it would be better to go wherever the majority of the people were going. If I would stay with a few people that would not be good. Otherwise, I didn't have any idea in detail. The State was telling the majority of the people to join the rukhag. If I went wherever most of the people were going, even if it would not succeed, I wouldn't feel regret. I also used to tell my children that "You should follow where the majority of the people are going. You should not listen to a few people who pretend to be capable and tell you to do this and that." At that time, my husband asked me if we were going to join the rukhag or not. And I said I am going to join it because most people were joining it. A group of people said they were going to join the rukhag and a group of people were not admitted in the rukhag.

Q: Who were the people not being admitted in the rukhag?

A: One of my relatives was not admitted. They were saying that they didn't have the complete conditions [Tib. cha rkyen 'dzoms med pa] for being admitted in the rukhag.

Q: What was the reason for some people not joining the rukhag?

A: I don't know what the reason was. Some people were insisting on not joining the rukhag.

Q: What did they say at that point about their reason?

A: They were saying, "It would not be good to establish that kind of [organization]. What is the use of establishing it [Tib. cho gang yong] instead of doing one's own work?" After that, they held several meetings. In the end they had to join the rukhag. Five to six households were not admitted in the rukhag.

Wherever the majority of the people were going, they asked me. I told them I am determined to go wherever the majority go. At that point, my elder daughter was telling me, "Would it be okay to do that? Can we catch up with the work of other people?" I said, "The State is telling us to join the rukhag so we should follow where the majority is going. If they tell us that we don't have the complete condition, Then we have to remain as before." At that point, the Director Ngodrub [Tib. dngos grub] shook hands with me and said that I was right.

After that, they assigned my husband to tend the goats that belonged to the rukhag. The Gongma household was assigned to tend sheep. At that point, I told them that "We are going to make a clear-cut agreement regarding the increase in the reproduction of the goats. In case the increase of goats would not be good what are you going to do? If our household has to receive some kind of punishment, we would not be able to accept it." They said if the increase would not be good or if the goats would die, we would not be blamed at all.

My husband was not a smart person, but he was good in tending goats, and I would feed the goats with some kind of herbs. The rukhag was saying that we took good care of the goats. I was doing much extra work, but I didn't pursue them for extra work points. At the time of the rukhag, I didn't have any problem. I was doing well.

Q: Was your livelihood good at that time?

A: Yes, the livelihood was good.

Q: Compared to your livelihood when you were in the Mutual Aid Team, was your livelihood better in the rukhag?

A: The livelihood in the rukhag was not worse than the Mutual Aid Team, but we were more afraid of being late at work in the

rukhang. At that point, our livelihood was not bad, but we had to compensate for some work points because there were only two of us working. But I worked hard from dawn in the morning until night.

Q: What work did you do at night?

A: The harvest and the threshing were done at night.

Q: Did you get extra work points when you worked at night?

A: Yes, that was why I was working at night.

Q: When you had to compensate the other people, did you have to pay money?

A: Yes, we had to pay money.

Q: How did you manage to get that money?

A: At that time, it was very difficult for me to compensate the money. After my children were grown up, I got some compensation from other people.

Q: How much compensation did you get?

A: Once I got about 450 yuan. That was the biggest amount. I deposited it in the Trust as soon as I got that money.

Q: When you had to compensate other people, how much did you have to pay at most?

A: One year I had to compensate 100 yuan. In another year, I had to compensate 90 yuan. The next year, I had to compensate nine fen. That was really funny. I thought he was kidding, so I told him, "You've got to be kidding! It might be 90 yuan." He said, "I am serious, it is only nine fen." Money was very valuable.

Q: At the time of the rukhang, did you have any shortage of food?

A: I didn't have any shortage of food, though we had to work hard. But we were not able to save money. We were just able to be self-reliant.

Q: Did you have to control your diet, at that point?

A: I never controlled the food of the children. I was giving them whatever food I had.

Q: You said that at the time of the Mutual Aid Team, the relation between the people was very good and people would not hold hatred and jealousy towards each other, was that correct?

A: Yes.

Q: How were the relations between people at the time of the rukhang?

A: During the rukhang, relations between people were much better than nowadays. People were helping each other and we were getting along very well. Supposing somebody was late at work, we would not tell the leader that he or she was late. If the leader would know that somebody was late, they would scold them. That was his duty, he was not to be blamed. Nowadays, the people are becoming worse and worse in my view. People are holding hatred and jealousy towards each other. I am not bragging, but I am always behaving quite tough [Tib. gyong po] and I was thinking they would not be able to do anything to me. It was like the proverb, "If somebody doesn't commit sins, there is no reason to be afraid of the Lord of Death [Tib. las ngan pa'i sdog pa ma bsags na/ zhed mi dgos gshin rje chos kyi rgyal]." If one didn't do anything wrong, they would not be able to do anything to you. When people die, then it is finished. We have to tell whatever we had done to the Lord of the Dead. If someone always tolerates things that happen, they will suffer losses and become worse.

When we had a serious shortage of money and some people were getting a lot of money secretly from the State, I didn't know how they were giving out this money. They didn't tell any reason for giving the money and they didn't give us a single fen. Now I am keeping these matters in here [pointing her finger at her chest]. When my son died, the government took a lot of notes. I am not sure what they were doing since [answer not finished].

Q: When did they take the notes?

A: That was last summer. They were asking me how my son died and they took a lot of notes. My son, my daughter Phentog and her husband died. About that, they took many notes. I thought that I should ask the two of you about that.

Q: Who were the people who took the notes?

A: They were probably from the xiang. Chamshö Tenzin [Tib. byams shod bstan 'dzin] was told to take the notes. They told him to take the notes about how old my son was when he died and what happened, etcetera.

Q: How did the Cultural Revolution start in your place?

A: We were told not to practice religion. Some people were made to suffer saying that they had organized a kind of Religious Association [Tib. chos tshogs]. And they held many struggle sessions against them. The late Imi [Tib. i mi] was a monk who was

the umdze of the Religious Association. There was a tall person called Sonam [Tib. bsod nams] who held struggle sessions against Imi and made him suffer a lot. He accused him saying that he had stabbed someone in the old society and he told him that he had done this and that. I saw those people suffering at the struggle session. At that time, they made a strict ban saying that people were not allowed to organize any religious associations.

There was a lama from Yamdrog [Tib. yar 'brog] with whom we had some relations in the past. Therefore, they put a paper hat on my late elder brother and Khangmarpa, and took them around the village. They were saying that the relations between that lama and the two of them were like evil ones joining together like the proverb, "The wolf and the jackal joining together [Tib. 'phar spyang lag 'brel]." Previously, we were asking that lama to do some divination, but we were not allowed to do that. They took all the religious offering utensils like the water offering bowls and butter lamps.

Q: Were you a Red Guard?

A: No, I was not a Red Guard.

Q: Why?

A: I was just an ordinary person. At that time, they were saying that they were Red Guards. They didn't even leave incense in the houses. They were saying that they were guards and they were wearing a red arm band. They told me "Auntie, you should not burn incense." I told them, "I do not recognize the gods and the demons, but I paid money for that. Leave the incense over there. I am using the incense to get rid of the odor of the children's diapers, clothes and bedding after they were washed." I took the incense back from their hands.

After that, some people were saying that we were not allowed to wear earrings and they said that they were going to take them off. I told them, "My parents bought these earrings for me. You guys didn't buy them for me." I didn't give them my earrings. I told them, "Leave my earring like this because it will not make any noise."

Q: During the Cultural Revolution, did you take off your earrings?

A: No, I didn't. I was wearing my earrings all the time. Some of the poor women gave their earrings to them. The people who came to take the incense were our own people. But I told them that I was using the incense for [getting rid of the odor of] my own body. I didn't give them the incense.

During the Cultural Revolution I didn't do anything show-offish and tell the people to take their belongings outside. I didn't have any other things to be taken away. The State told them to go search for something in the houses. Some people stole things like women's ornaments from the households when they went to search. That was not fair. Those people were not working for the State. They didn't steal anything from me.

Q: When they were doing those things, what did you think?

A: When they were destroying the statues and those things, I thought what is happening now? At that point, I didn't go to destroy those things. And my children were not big enough to do those things. I also didn't say that you shouldn't destroy those things, and if you do that you would be committing negative deeds. If they did whatever they were told to do from above, there would not be any problem. But there were some people doing something in between. Those people are still alive. I never trusted those people who were show-offish and who were saying that they were the Red Guards.

Q: Why?

A: Because they were all thieves. If they were working for the State, they should be a little bit fair and honest. People were given the right of freedom. But when those people were sent to do something, they were rummaging around in the households. Those people were not working for the State. I didn't go to do anything saying that the State told us to do that. And I didn't tell anybody about what they were doing at that point. I was just keeping quite. That was like the proverb, "There will be less law cases if people would keep quite [Tib. kha kha rog bsad na kha mchu nyung]."

Q: Were there two groups during the Cultural Revolution?

A: Yes, there were two groups.

Q: Did the people split into two groups, the Nyamdre and the Gyenlo?

A: Yes. I heard that some people were joining the Women's Association. As for myself, I was not doing the opposite things, but they were saying that I was the daughter of Kepa, so I was not permitted to join the Women's Association because my [class] conditions were not complete. The next year the people who were not permitted to join the Women's Association were told to join the Association. At that point, I told them, last time when we reported for joining the Association, [the end of the tape].